

# Getting it Right Fast While Serving a Nation at War

**Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Policy and Procurement (DASA(P&P)) Tina Ballard directly supports the Army Acquisition Executive (AAE)/ Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology. Serving as the Army's principal acquisition and procurement/industrial base policy authority, she manages and executes the Army's worldwide contracting function, overseeing all contracting operations, organizations, resources, policies and procedures. Additionally, she is the Functional Chief's Representative for the Army Contracting and Acquisition Career Program and is responsible for the Army contracting workforce's recruitment, training, education and professional development. Prior to this position, she was the Director of Combat Support Operations and the Deputy Executive Director of Contract Management Operations in the Defense Contract Management Agency. Her responsibilities included agency policy to accomplish contingency contract administration services in multiple theaters of military operations, supplier risk management, quality assurance and engineering support, delivery management, pricing/modification actions, business and financial systems, payment and financial management, contract closeout and industrial base analysis. Ballard brings a wealth of contingency contracting and procurement policy expertise to the Army contracting team. Her focus on innovative policies and business solutions ensures the Army contracting community will continue to provide responsive contracting instruments that deliver requirements-based products, services and equipment into the hands of our Soldiers whenever and wherever they are needed most.**

**U.S. Army Soldiers from the Brigade Support Battalion, 172nd Infantry Brigade, remove a transmission from a heavy load cargo vehicle at Forward Operating Base Marez near Mosul, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I).)**

**AL&T:** Our warfighters get equipment and training everyday. Why would they connect that to Army contracting?

**Ballard:** Frankly, I don't think they do and the connection to the Army contracting community should be transparent. It's more important that Army contracting professionals make the connection to our men and women in uniform. Our vision is to be "One Community Serving our Soldiers, Serving our Nation." If a Soldier shoots it, drives it, wears it or eats it, chances are an Army contract procured it. If it's a national mission performed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE] or the National Guard Bureau, we support it. I have seen contracting professionals go the extra miles, work long hours and weekends, and even sacrifice their lives to provide Soldier support and serve our great Nation. These folks work around the clock, around the world, doing what needs to be done. All of us provide a service, and that service is critical to our Soldiers getting what they need, when and where they need it.

**AL&T:** What are some of the vital duties performed by Army contracting officers (KOs)?

**Ballard:** Our KOs respond to requirements in peacetime and in time of war. This means buying the systems, equipment, spare parts and training that prepares, maintains and sustains the Current Force. It means having contingency contracts in place with the ability to surge requirements when needed, get things out of the industrial base quickly and have the right contractual instruments in place to do it. In 2003, at the outset of the war in Iraq, we had contracts valued at more than \$61 billion. Last year, our contract value had increased to almost \$95 billion. Another vital duty is deploying with the force. Military contingency contracting

officers [CCOs] embedded with warfighting units such as the 101st Airborne Division rotate with those units. The Army has contracting organizations associated with each of the geographical combatant commanders and in those organizations there are both military and civilians supporting contingency operations. Another example is in working with our international partners who want to win contracts in Iraq. When DOD asked how to inform coalition partners on contracting with DOD, Army contracting professionals were selected to represent the Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD], they engaged our coalition partners' industrial base, and taught them how to contract with DOD.

**AL&T:** How are contracting personnel rotated in and out of the theater of operations?

**Ballard:** The geographical combatant commanders responsible for a specific contingency operation determine manning needs and we contribute to developing the joint manning document. The actual requirement for contracting personnel is supported through either military or civilian authorizations, assignments and volunteers. The rotation schedule within the Army varies in length from 6 to 12 months. Our Soldiers normally deploy on a 1-year rotation while civilians typically deploy for 6 months.

**AL&T:** You have contracting personnel in Iraq. President Bush has said that the Nation needs to know the global war on terrorism [GWOT] is a "Long War." What challenges does a

protracted operation such as *Operations Enduring* and *Iraqi Freedom* (OEF/OIF) hold for Army contracting personnel?

**Ballard:** A protracted operation provides challenges and opportunities. The challenge *and* the opportunity is to

get the products or services through the various contract vehicles we can bring to bear against stated Soldier requirements and combatant commander expectations. To get it right and fast, we have to identify the overall operational mission's contract requirements and determine whether or not products and services can be reliably procured from host nation [HN] contractors and suppliers or will the materials have to come from previously approved U.S.-

supplied sources. When we first deployed into Iraq, the Head of the Contracting Activity [HCA] was a colonel and his staff consisted of two people. We have adapted as the mission has evolved. Today we have the Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan [JCC-I/A]. The HCA has evolved from an Army colonel to a flag officer with the assignment of U.S. Air Force MG Darryl A. Scott as the current JCC-I/A commander. To keep pace, we have evolved from three people in Baghdad to 204 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians, including those serving in Regional Contracting Centers in multiple locations throughout Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

**AL&T:** Does the contracting workforce consistently get Soldiers what they need right and fast?

**Ballard:** Yes, and I have many examples that support that statement. However,

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**PFC Chris Smith, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, provides perimeter security during a combat patrol in the Ameriah District, Baghdad, Iraq, May 21, 2006. (Photo courtesy of MNF-I.)**

let me answer that question from a different construct. Getting a contract action quote “right” in DOD requires almost 2,000 pages of the *Federal Acquisition Regulation [FAR]*, its 53 sections and 106 chapters of supplements. These regulations are executed in an environment where laws change and new laws can come into existence. Where laws, regulations, policies, guidance, inspectors and auditors combine having immediate and real implications for getting it right, getting it fast is often subject to many other challenges — challenges in the requirements, statutory requirements on minimum times required for bidders, socio-economical considerations, changing priorities and other variables that are outside the KO’s control. And, at the end of the day, the KO’s action legally creates an obligation for the government. If we get it wrong, the costs can be significant for both the Soldiers who need the equipment and services and the taxpayer who pays the bill.

**AL&T:** So, there’s a lot of emphasis on compliance with rules and regulatory guidelines?

**Ballard:** Yes, those rules can work for and against us, depending on the situation. Following the compliance rules takes time and it can be understandably frustrating for folks waiting for equipment or services to be procured. On the other hand, not following the rules

can cost DOD and the Army precious credibility in terms of the trust that the American public bestows on the uniformed services. These complexities can’t be minimized, but they must be planned for. What we can do — what we *are* doing — is

making a commitment to get it done by using all of the flexibilities and innovation at our disposal. When we do that, we absolutely get it done right and fast.

From a contracting perspective, we must absolutely understand and communicate the requirements so we do get what the requirer wants — not just in supplies or services but also in performance, on time, at the right place. Often the folks answering questions about how requirements should be written are the contracting professionals themselves because they work most closely with the requiring organization and offerors. Working with acquisition professionals, they answer questions when bidders don’t completely understand the requirements.

**AL&T:** There has been a lot of publicity about contracting in Iraq. A reader might argue that there is a lot wrong with “no-bid contracts.”

**Ballard:** Those arguments have been made. The fact is, there are sole-source contracts awarded under the authority of the *Competition in Contracting Act [CICA]*. You might say the terms “sole-source” and “CICA” sound technical and bureaucratic. The fact is, the law anticipated circumstances when competition would not be possible. Our lawmakers recognized that, in some circumstances, getting our men and women in

uniform what they need takes precedence. Sole-source contracts are permitted under the law and the ones we awarded were appropriate. Reviews by the Government Accountability Office validated that we followed the correct process as the law requires. Equally important, we got the Soldiers the support they needed for the warfight, when they needed it most.

**AL&T:** Since March 2003, the MNF-I has helped Iraq rebuild its military and police forces. Iraqi Security Forces have gone from 0 to 240,000 people in a relatively short period of time. What part has Army contracting played in helping the MNF-I with this effort?

**Ballard:** Actually, our first contracting effort related to Iraqi Security Forces was to provide training for those forces. This effort came to us as a request from U.S. Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III. He wanted the contract for training awarded and the contractor on the ground in 30 days. To do that, the Army Contracting Agency [ACA]-Southern Region used all the flexibilities available and competitively awarded the contract in 25 days, allowing five days for the selected contractor to arrive in Iraq and start work, as requested. Today, JCC-I/A’s Security and Justice Sector KOs provide contracting support to organize, train, equip and mentor the Iraqi Civilian Police forces and Department of Border Enforcement Forces. They have awarded nearly 2,300 contracts valued at \$1.6 billion. In addition to the forward contracting, the TACOM Life Cycle Management Command [LCMC] has provided the necessary reach-back support to MNF-I, awarding more than 38 contracts valued at \$901 million.

**AL&T:** How many CCOs and non-commissioned officers have been deployed since March 2003 in direct support of OEF/OIF?

**Ballard:** As with any deployment, those numbers change over time. Between December 2005 and February 2006 for example, the JCC-I/A and USACE Gulf Region Division had more than 150 CCOs deployed. Contracting professionals in Iraq contributed to actions that resulted in 8 new medical clinics completed and 3 more near completion, electrical service throughout Iraq has increased from 4 hours a day in March 2003 to 12 hours per day in 2006, and 19 water treatment plants serving nearly 3 million Iraqis have been built. Now an additional 1 million people have access to potable water that didn't have it before, and an additional 9 million more people have access to sewer facilities. Those are just a few facts about Iraq. The Army has 286 CCOs deployed worldwide.

**AL&T:** Where else have Army CCOs been successful?

**Ballard:** The Army helped provide disaster and humanitarian relief following the 2005 hurricane season. Our CCOs deployed and assisted after the tsunami that devastated South and Southeast Asia, and CCOs are actively serving in Korea, Germany, the Pacific and Southwest Asia. Examples of their efforts include the ACA-Pacific Region's responsive contracting support for numerous supplies and services totaling nearly \$60 million to support ongoing operations in Southwest Asia. Those contracts included unique services for the receipt, warehousing, maintenance and servicing of automobiles, sport utility vehicles [SUVs], pickup trucks and motorcycles

for Soldiers deploying from Hawaii and Alaska to support GWOT. Another example is the unprecedented disaster relief support rendered by ACA-The Americas [ACA-TA] following the three hurricanes that decimated parts of Guatemala last October. ACA-TA directly provided Joint Task Force-Bravo [JTF-B] contin-

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gency contract support that included bottled water and food, cell phones, lodging, translation services, transportation and general supplies. During the relief effort, ACA-TA embedded one of their CCOs in JTF-B for the duration of the relief effort.

**AL&T:** What new and innovative policies and practices are on the forefront of Army contracting to energize contracting responsiveness for our combatant commanders and Soldiers in the field?

**Ballard:** We have developed a single document with all of the emergency authorities to expedite contract actions. There are more than 15 separate emergency procurement

authorities located in 12 different parts of the *FAR/DFARS*. Chances are if a person hasn't used a particular authority, they probably wouldn't know about it or where to find it. Now the workforce has one comprehensive document to refer to for all authorities. We have also developed a new source selection guide that will be instrumental in providing consistency in our approach to the selection process. We are training the workforce on fiscal law, development of estimates and cost realism. We are looking at our pricing practices to define how we provide better capability and get better

prices. We are also working on guidance to implement Vice Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Richard A. Cody's direction to reduce service contracts and the expenditures associated with them. There is a lot to be done on the immediate event horizon for the Army contracting community.

**AL&T:** Army contracting professionals can be called "ghost walkers for Soldiers." They set up the infrastructure and support structures necessary whenever and wherever a U.S. Soldier deploys. What are some of the vital duties performed by U.S. Army uniformed and civilian KOs during the predeployment and deployment phases of an operation?

**Ballard:** When you talk about pre-deployment, the ACA is very much engaged in force projection at the installation level. And there's another aspect that's very important to keep in mind once our Soldiers deploy — they leave their families at home on these installations. ACA is very engaged and doing things that take care of those families through contracting. It is very important for a Soldier who's forward deployed to know that his family will get medical and dental care and other important community services. With each new deployment, we find better and more innovative ways to take care of Soldiers and their families. For instance, we've awarded better contracts to store and care for Soldier vehicles while they are overseas. These are things that give people peace of mind as they go into combat. And the Army contracting community is addressing these needs and others as new requirements are identified. The term "ghost walkers for Soldiers" is really very appropriate because what we do is invisible. All our customers want to know is that a new hospital is there in Hawaii to provide critical healthcare for Soldiers' families. That particular

contract was significant because the hospital was built very quickly to meet urgent family needs and that meant that people now could use a military medical facility instead of an expensive off-post hospital or clinic.

In terms of predeployment, there are preparatory things that take place before a unit deploys. What will the infrastructure be like? Will the host nation economy be able to provide the necessary supplies and services? Will local contractors want to assist U.S. Forces? Likewise, how do we provide force protection for our contracting folks and contractors? What will be the operational extent of the maneuver units? How do we set up regional contract support offices? How do we overcome cultural and language barriers? These are just a few of the numerous questions that must be addressed by our CCOs prior to deployment. Prior to beginning *OIF* deployments, there were several actions that our people were working around the clock to ensure that we had contractors where they needed to be to provide support to Soldiers as they went into the theater the first week of the war.

In terms of the deployment phases of an operation, notwithstanding the fact that the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program has been very visible in the media,

that's just one of hundreds of contracts that support Soldiers in the deployment phase of an operation. The Stryker vehicle maintenance support contract that was awarded by the TACOM LCMC took a new business approach that was very innovative. It is a vehicle that gets great press from Soldiers because of its performance and its capability in the war. But again, the people who wrote the contracts, who enforced the clauses and the provisions, who ensured that the deliveries were on time, those people are invisible to the Soldier.

I can assure you, because I've seen it personally over the last few years, there is not a single time that we've called on someone in the contracting community to meet a Soldier's need and they said, "No, it's four o'clock and I'm going home." What they say is, "What do I need to do?" and they stay until the job gets done. From a contracting standpoint, our seamless support means that Soldiers get the weapons, food and clothing they need when they need them. Army contracting professionals are very committed and will employ extraordinary measures to ensure that Soldiers get what they need in a timely manner. So in that sense, we are ghost walkers for Soldiers because we're always with them. Army contracting community professionals know that getting the job done for Soldiers is far more important than being seen doing the job.

**AL&T:** What new and innovative policies, precedents and procedures is the contracting community getting ready to implement Army-wide to energize contracting responsiveness and speed up contract awards?

**Ballard:** One of the most significant things we've done recently in the contracting community is to establish a think tank of senior leaders across Army contracting. The purpose is to get our seasoned professionals together to work on developing strategies for where we need to take Army contracting in the future. We focused on two things: the workforce and business processes. We know that you can't get anything done without a well-trained, effective workforce. So it was important that we focus on developing, recruiting and retaining our current workforce. The second thing is to thoroughly examine our business practices and processes. Through this think tank, we identified five areas that we must address.

For the contracting workforce, we decided to establish and revitalize how we manage our employees' career progression. We've established a governance board that is made up of several subcommittees that will develop a road map for everyone in our career field. The message we are sending to our workforce is, wherever you are in your career, we want you to be the best that you can be at that place in your career. As leaders, we need to be very clear as to what the workforce's training needs are so they can better support our Soldiers. By examining our business processes, we have redefined our important core competencies and capabilities. Right now, we recognize that the cost-price analyst area is one that needs revitalization and focus. There's a lot of emphasis on this and rightly so. Are we getting the best value, are we getting the best price? Frankly, cost-price analysis is becoming a lost art — not just in the Army but in our sister services and other government agencies as well.

For example, after Hurricane Katrina, we brought in people from all over the country to support USACE. We have



**DASA(P&P) Tina Ballard discusses the contributions the Army contracting community makes every day to Soldiers on the front lines. (U.S. Army photo by Mike Roddin.)**

learned to leverage our capabilities — if we have one cost-price analyst in Michigan then we bring that person to Louisiana to help with Hurricane Katrina contracts for a short time.

Another thing we have looked at is our source selection procedures. What we found is that we have a lot of excellence throughout the Army but it wasn't something that was integrated and we hadn't done a great job of leveraging and combining that excellence to increase our overall capability or to expand our capacity. The think tank is charged with determining, then capturing, our best across-Army practices. Source selection is, of course, a very important area. It's important to us as we make decisions about who will provide products and services for the government. It's important to industry, which is bidding on our contracts, to know they will have a fair opportunity to receive an award. Our industry partners need to know that we must provide our frontline troops the best product for the best price. Nothing less will do.

Another area we're about to focus on in terms of Lean/Six Sigma is the justification and approval [J&A] process. Under *CICA*, we can allow exceptions to the preferred method of contracting, which is, of course, competition. What we find is that those requests in a time of war are really time-critical. But too often when the package gets to the Pentagon, it's been somewhere else for four to six months and then, of course, by the time it gets here there's another period of time before that document gets signed. What we have done is establish a Lean/Six Sigma team to look at the J&A process. We want to shorten the time it takes from recognizing we need a J&A to getting it signed by the AAE who approves the exception to the *CICA*. Those are just

a few things we are doing to speed up the contracting process.

We're also going to identify some other areas to implement the Lean/Six Sigma initiative in contracting. We have partnered with the Defense Acquisition University [DAU] to look at their performance-learning model. From a workforce professional development aspect, we're also partnering with DAU to look at course development for our specific needs in contracting. We have acquired extensive contracting experience during *OIF*, so we can help DAU develop business cases using real-time scenarios of the more interesting contracting actions that have resulted from this war. That will help all DOD students attending DAU.

We are also going to examine the current DAU course on cost-pricing analysis. DAU President Frank Anderson agrees that this is an area where we need to strengthen our capability, and so we're going to work with DAU to strengthen the curriculum in this area. Also, DAU has an extensive performance-learning model that I believe is unprecedented. Until I visited DAU recently, I had no idea of the capability that's available to us through that performance-learning model. This model was presented at our Procuring Contractor Training Symposium July 10-13, 2006, in Miami, FL, so that Army leaders and the contracting community at large could return to their workplace and take that capability and knowledge with them.

We continue to share our best business practices in contracting through *Army*



**A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter descends to extract 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division Soldiers from Forward Operating Base Summerall, Iraq, during operations on June 9, 2006. (Photo courtesy of MNF-I.)**

*AL&T* Magazine in the Contracting Community Highlights section (Page 56). Another way is through our PARC Conferences, which we hold twice a year. We leverage other meetings, such as the procurement training symposium, so that we maximize getting key lessons learned out to our community. My Director of Procurement Policy, Emily Clarke, holds teleconferences with the policy directors in the field and she communicates on a regular basis with them. And, of course, there is the ever-present e-mail to get our best practices out to the community quickly. Also, we can establish a community of practice with DAU. For example, we could have a community of practice on source selections where people can come together to talk about what they've done, what worked well and what needs improvement. And we can capture lessons learned there as well. We can host on-line discussions with subject matter experts from the community of practice or interested parties can just go there and reference information.

In closing, I want to pay tribute to the Army contracting community's dedication, professionalism and service to our Soldiers and our Nation. These civilian and military contracting professionals go the extra mile for Soldiers and their families. I am very proud to represent the Army's contracting workforce.